



## Late Fall in the Rose Garden

by Anne Skinner, UC Master Gardener

The fall rose blooms have been fragrant and surprisingly lovely, even after the hot, dry summer they experienced. The flowers will tempt you to encourage them to continue blooming. In truth, letting the flowers develop into rose hips and not providing fertilizer now is best for the plant.

Rose hips are the fruits or seed pods of the plant and form from a bloom left on the plant until the petals fall off. They signal the plant to slow new vegetative growth. The next fertilizer application should be 4-6 weeks after your January pruning to encourage new growth in spring.

While we don't have winter temperatures as low as 10 degrees, which can damage the graft union, our roses do benefit from a period of semi-dormancy during the winter months. A healthy plant that has hardened-off will survive a frost better than an actively growing plant. "Hardening-off" slows plant growth to better withstand environmental changes.

### Fall Garden Tasks

It's too early to seriously prune back the rose bushes, as this encourages new growth, especially if we experience a warm spell. It is beneficial to trim off dead wood, overly long canes, and remove dead leaves and debris under the plants. This will make it easier to prune the bushes in January, and reduce overwintering pests hiding in the debris under the plants.

Check the plants for disease, such as mosaic virus, which causes a light green to bright yellow mosaic pattern on the leaves. This symptom is most noticeable in fall and spring. If only a small area of the plant is affected, remove the mottled leaves. The virus can reduce the vigor of the plant, cause fewer blooms, and make it more susceptible to winter injury. There is no cure for the disease. It is transmitted through grafting mosaic virus infected rootstock, cuttings or buds. You may prefer to remove the infected plant from your garden. Details on rose mosaic virus and other diseases of roses can be found at:

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7463.html>.

Check also for insects, such as cucumber beetles, aphids, and spider mites. Many overwintering insects can be thwarted by cleaning up debris under the plant and by spraying with horticultural oil after your January pruning.



Rose hips



Rose mosaic virus

## **Plan Ahead and Research**

This is a good time to evaluate the roses. Are some of them thin, with few leaves and blooms? Are they in a location receiving at least 6 hours of sun daily? Do any of them have extensive mosaic virus? Which bushes are performing well, with healthy green foliage and many blooms? Which roses are your favorites or have a sentimental value--such as remembering this rose in your mother's garden?

Are there areas of the rose garden that could benefit from reworking the irrigation system? This is the time to plan ahead and research changes to make during the winter and spring. Bare root roses, which are much less expensive than purchasing a potted rose, are available in January.

They do dry out quickly in their packaging, so planning ahead for their new home is essential. If you have the location all cleared, irrigation set up and your rose choice made, then you will be ready to plant after the holidays.

Some rose varieties do better in our climate and some are more readily available from catalogs, so doing research in advance pays off. If you wish to transplant a rose bush, do so in February to give the small, new roots time to become established before hot or cold weather extremes occur.

Rose care information is available on our web site at:

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Roses,\\_Roses,\\_Roses\\_863/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Roses,_Roses,_Roses_863/).

The Ten Steps to Beautiful Roses outlines pruning techniques and has rose care tips by the month.

The Master Gardener rose pruning demonstrations will be Monday, January 18, 2016 at Grangeville in **Hanford** and Saturday, January 23, 2016 at the Tulare County Courthouse in **Visalia**. Bring your garden pruners, gloves and questions.

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